

# RICHLAND NORTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL

Richland School District Two

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# **2013 DICK AND TUNKY RILEY AWARD SUBMISSION**

## **Richland Northeast High School – CASE STATEMENT**

### **RNE – Who We Are**

Richland Northeast High School (RNE) is one of five high schools within Richland School District Two (RSD2) in Columbia, SC. RNE currently has the smallest high school student population at 1,406 students. The current total student population is 933 African American Students, 296 Caucasian students, 118 Hispanic students, 38 Asian students, 5 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, and 4 American Indian students and 12 bi-racial students. The free and reduced lunch student population is 846 out of 1406. The SACS Survey results that include the statistics such as 1 parent household %, two parent household %, living with guardian %, parent occupations, poverty index %, average yearly family income are kept now at the District level and not available on a per school basis.

RNE is the second oldest high school, being founded in 1978. Since then, three other high schools have been built in the District as the student population has continued to grow at an accelerated pace and has moved increasingly further and further in the opposite direction towards the Kershaw County line. While RNE used to be considered centrally located in the District, it now finds itself on the outer edge of the District in an area without opportunity for new residential growth. The Decker Boulevard Corridor is the closest business and consumer area to the school and it too has suffered an economic downturn as major retailers that anchored the area have moved further across the county to be closer to new housing where family incomes tend to be higher. The businesses that remain are largely independent internationally flavored stores including restaurants, specialty grocery stores, clothing stores and some gift shops, reflecting local populations in the immediate area including Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Indian, African and Vietnamese. The county, capitalizing on this unique character of the area, has defined the area as the "International Corridor" and continues to work to revitalize the area in which RNE is located.

This economic impact affects RNE in a variety of important ways. The depressed economic area causes RNE to have a higher than average number of students who are minority, financially disadvantaged, and speak English as a second language. It has also generated a negative image of RNE by families within the district and community who equate the older facilities/large minority population with an inferior opportunity for quality education.

### **Issues of the SIC**

The RNE SIC this past year has had the following three top goals that were devised as a result of the changing nature of the student population as detailed above:

- Goal 1: Work to maintain a well-balanced student population, demographically, economically and academically
- Goal 2: Institute a Re-Branding initiative with a local Marketing/PR professional to improve RNE's reputation and standing within the District and community
- Goal 3: Improve communications between RNE and students/families/community

### **Actions and Results**

RSD2 has a reputation of having ground-breaking magnets and “schools within a school” to offer students specific educational opportunities geared towards their academic abilities and interests. The District also has a school choice initiative that gives students the ability to attend schools outside their zoned area. These features, coupled with RNE’s recent designation as an International Baccalaureate School have helped the SIC immeasurably with achieving its Goal 1. The SIC worked extensively with the administration and District to promote the IB status within the community via billboards, print materials and special IB interest meetings. The largest effort towards this goal came about during the recent District re-zoning process as a result of the opening of the 5<sup>th</sup> district high school this school year. Several drafts were debuted to the public and each of the scenarios showed RNE with a disproportionately high minority and lower-socio economic population in relation to the other high schools, whose populations saw a decrease in these areas. It was disconcerting to the SIC in its efforts to maintain a diverse student population. It was felt that a diverse student population was necessary in all schools to benefit all students. To that end, the SIC raised public awareness not just within the RNE population, but also within the community. The SIC partnered with local elected officials, the Columbia Urban League, the local chapter of the NAACP, and attorneys with specialized skills in maintaining racially diverse populations in schools to lobby the school board members and influence their ultimate decision to re-draw the zoning lines that took RNE SIC’s concerns into consideration. The end result was much more favorable to not only RNE, but also to most constituents in the District.

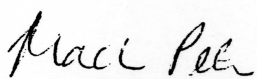
As a result of the re-zoning efforts, the RNE SIC immediately began a close working relationship with the School Board and District to improve the physical facilities. It became apparent during the re-zoning effort that the negative public perception of RNE had a lot to do with physical appearance. RNE is currently the recipient of a long list of physical improvements, as a result of the issues brought to light during the zoning process that includes a complete renovation of athletic fields and the creation of a RNE sports-complex that is comparable to what the newer high schools in the district enjoy; a parking lot re-design with new attractive signage and fencing in the front of the campus; a media center upgrade; and other additions/upgrades.

Another important result of the re-zoning initiative was the need to work with a professional Marketing firm to improve the image RNE had with the public. SIC did this with a local Marketing Professional and RNE Parent, Ginger Bates. It was a several month process that began with a series of meetings with her to ascertain what RNE was looking to achieve, what the concept of Re-Branding entailed, and how best to begin the process. This was followed by a survey developed by Ms. Bates with the SIC’s input that was sent to current students, alumni, faculty, parents, community members and local businesses. The survey’s purpose was to determine what the public perception of RNE was and why and to develop a list of positives and negatives surrounding the school. From there, various individuals were invited to come onto campus and be a part of focus groups to garner more in-depth information on public perceptions regarding RNE. The end result of all this information gathering was solid, concrete information that could be used by the SIC to Re-Brand and improve the community image of the school. An updated Cavalier Logo was developed as well as an accompanying tag line, “RNE – The Right Direction”. The SIC is in the process now of incorporating that new logo and tagline in all its promotional materials including stationary, sporting uniforms and promotional items, website, print materials, etc....There was


also the return to the school's original colors. These efforts are meant to give RNE a uniform and consistent appearance which had been a problem identified in the re-branding process.

The results of the re-zoning and the re-branding effort led to formulation of Goal 3 which was to make an intentional effort to increase and improve communications. The SIC began with creating a bi-weekly E-newsletter that is sent out to every parent email list in the system. It is also posted on the school website as well as on various social networking sites. It is a full scale, color publication with news for families regarding various upcoming events, deadlines, sports news, student awards and highlights, career and guidance information, extra-curricular opportunities and much more. It is usually 4-5 pages long and has become an excellent tool to give the families opportunity to feel involved and connected with RNE. The content is submitted by various groups and staff members and parents, and put together in-house by the Lead Teacher for the RNE based Convergence Media Magnet and her students. The direction of this communication effort is overviewed and managed by the SIC and school administration. The second major communication effort was to expand all guidance and career news to include all RNE families and not just limited to families of seniors. This has generated positive feedback as families feel better informed as to what is required from students as they begin the process of college investigation, scholarship applications and financial aid.

The affirmation that the RNE SIC has recently received that it is moving in the right direction came from the SC State Board of Education which awarded the RNE SIC the 2012 School Improvement Council of the Year.



Machael Peterson, SIC Co-Chair



Butch Owens, SIC Co-Chair





# Richland Northeast High School

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Office of the Principal  
November 27, 2012

Riley Awards Committee  
USC College of Education  
Wardlaw Building, Suite 001  
Columbia, SC 29208

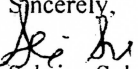
Dear Members of the Riley Award Committee,

I am writing to recommend the Richland Northeast High School School Improvement Council for the Dick and Tunky Riley Award. As the Principal of Richland Northeast High School, I can attest to the determination, dedication, and tenacity of this very important group comprised of parents, teachers, students, and community members. In fact, it is without hesitation and with utter confidence that I acknowledge that without this group, many of the achievements and accolades of the last eighteen months could not have taken place.

As the population of Richland School District Two has shifted to the northeast end of the county, Richland Northeast High School has decreased in size while increasing in percentage of disadvantaged students. Due to this shift, many people in the community began to overlook the excellent educational achievements and advancements that take place on our campus. During the rezoning efforts of the 2011-2012 school year, the SIC recognized the disparity that was beginning to take place and worked to bring change. Through their efforts, they were able to expand the positive relationship with the Richland Two Board of Trustees and work with the Board to secure improvements.

The most visible improvement made at Richland Northeast High school is one that was undertaken directly by the SIC. This change includes expanding and improving the physical space of the school. The SIC has worked with the Board to find the funding to build improved sports facilities and to redesign existing but outdated space throughout the campus. The result is a campus that is modern and provides increased opportunities for our students. Additionally, the SIC has made great strides initiating and supporting new academic offerings including the International Baccalaureate Diploma and Middle Years Programmes, an expanded Health Science program, a new Culinary Arts program, and an innovative Project Based Learning initiative. Finally, the SIC has undertaken the massive task of rebranding the school through a marketing campaign designed to attract positive attention to Richland Northeast High School. Billboards, newsletters, and community efforts with an cohesive look and theme have helped to promote the positive actions taking place at Richland Northeast High School.

Through their tremendous efforts, the SIC of Richland Northeast has changed the perception of the school in the community and has impacted the school directly with positive change. I am fortunate to be a member of the Cavalier Family and to see the efforts of this group first hand. The SIC is deserving of the Dick and Tunky Riley Award and will be an excellent model of the values this award upholds.

Sincerely,  
  
Sabrina Suber  
Principal

A Twice Recognized National Blue Ribbon School

Dear Riley Award Committee,

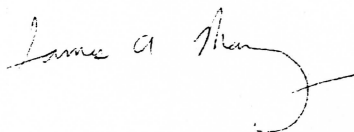
It is with great pleasure that I have this opportunity to write a letter of recommendation for the SIC at Richland Northeast High School (RNE). Richland Northeast High School is the second oldest high school in Richland School District Two and has a deep rooted history of excellence and pride within the Northeast Columbia community. Our parents, business representatives, community members, and staff that comprise the SIC at RNE have always been a keystone to the success that our students have enjoyed over the years. However, the actions of the RNE SIC over the last two years have truly set this group of volunteers apart from any other volunteer group that I have ever worked with or been part of.

The SIC at Richland Northeast High School began to set themselves apart when our Richland Two board began the difficult process of rezoning to accommodate the newest high school in our district. I believe that the rezoning process for high schools is one of the most disruptive processes that a community can endure, especially considering the deep roots that RNE has in our district. During the rezoning process I had the opportunity to see the worst and the best in our parents and community members. While some neighborhoods were writing anonymous letters that were full of accusatory overtones, the leadership of our RNE SIC created an atmosphere in which our Richland Northeast High School parents and community members maintained a positive and constructive attitude that made my job as a board member much easier. It was with the help of the RNE SIC that we were able to sit down and talk about the specific issues in a manner that allowed us to reach a compromise that has ultimately led to a much stronger community for the whole district, not just Richland Northeast High School. They brought experts to the discussion whose insight and thought provoking statements made the end result much better than it would have been without their input. This demonstration of leadership would set most groups aside without any further evidence. However, with this group that was not the end.

Over the last year and a half they have continued to take full ownership of the process of reinvigorating a sense of community pride and youthful energy into the south end of the district unlike anything we have seen before. They have continued to initiate discussions that have led to a complete overhaul of our sports facilities, school facade, parking area, and more for RNE. Just as before, they carried out the process in a professional manner. They brought specific problems and possible solutions, they listened as well as talked, and they took action rather than sitting back and waiting on someone else to do the work. They have also led our efforts to rebrand RNE. The rebranding effort was led by the SIC which saved the district a lot of money and has made the end result more personal for our district two community. This personal touch is priceless in our efforts to promote the new International Baccalaureate Programme and the many other unique arts and science based programs at RNE.

In closing, there is no other group that I have worked with who has committed the number of hours, that has had the leadership to set a constructive tone during difficult conversations, that has maintained the level of passion that they have over an extended period of time, and that has made a physical difference for our students and community members that will be felt and seen for many years to come as the Richland Northeast SIC. I hope that you will use them as a template for how the governing process should work and to show how a small group of dedicated individuals can make a positive difference for everyone by considering them for the Dick and Tunky Riley SIC Award.

Sincerely,



**James Manning, M.A.T.**

Secretary, Board of Trustees  
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JOEL LOURIE

SENATOR, RICHLAND AND KERSHAW COUNTIES  
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November 26, 2012

SC School Improvement Council  
USC College of Education  
Ward Law Building  
Suite 001  
Columbia, SC 29208

Dear Riley Award Committee,

It is my pleasure to write a letter of support for Richland Northeast High School who is applying for the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Council Award for Excellence.

As a proud graduate of Richland Northeast, 1980, and as a parent of two children who both attended RNE, I can certainly speak to the great accomplishments of the School Improvement Council. As with most school districts in our state, Richland Two has experienced large growth over the past several years. The SIC has initiated a very close working relationship with the Richland Two School Board to improve communication and to address concerns as Richland Northeast is one of the oldest high schools in the district.

There has been an extensive undertaking to re-brand the high school in an effort to improve the overall public perception of the school and to highlight the wonderful programs available at RNE. Communication has also been a center of focus with efforts made within the school/family population, outreach to alumni and promotion within the community. In my opinion, the SIC has done an outstanding job of engaging with the general public to build support for Richland Northeast.

Richland Northeast has been a staple in our community for decades and I am both proud and honored to be a part of the Richland Northeast family. I hope you will give the application for the Dick and Tunky SIC Award your full consideration. If I can answer any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joel Lourie".

Joel Lourie

JL/mn

**2013 DICK AND TUNKY RILEY AWARD FOR SIC EXCELLENCE  
RICHLAND NORTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL - LEVEL TWO NARRATIVE**

**PROGRESS ON RNE SIC GOALS 2011-2012 ACADEMIC YEAR**

Goal: Work to maintain a well-balanced student population, demographically, economically and academically.

The RNE SIC was very involved this past year in the Richland Two process of re-districting due to the opening of a new high school. As explained at length in RNE's original Level One Application, several drafts of new high school attendance lines were presented to the public and each of the three scenarios showed RNE with a disproportionately high minority and lower-socio economic population in relation to the other high schools, which saw a decrease in these areas.

- Outcome: The RNE SIC became very involved in engaging dialogue between the community and the school board members that resulted in a more balanced and diverse student population, not just at RNE but across all high schools within the district.
- Next Step: The RNE SIC and Administration will continue to monitor student diversity each year as RNE attracts students across the district with its International Baccalaureate Programme Status. Further, the RNE SIC will continue to work with the district on a three-year facilities upgrade plan.

Goal: Institute a Re-Branding initiative to improve RNE's reputation and standing within the district and community.

The RNE SIC partnered with Ginger Bates, a marketing professional and RNE parent, to Re-Brand RNE and began an aggressive marketing campaign to improve the public perception of RNE.

- Outcome: The existing RNE Cavalier Logo was modernized with an updated look that would be the consistent visual image in all of RNE's marketing materials. It was discovered that RNE lacked a definitive image that the community associated with the school. It was found that over the years various school organizations, departments, sports teams and such had deviated and created their own defining images. This was confusing and affected the unity that RNE needed to present overall. In addition to this, the original school colors had fallen out of use and the colors being used were not consistent across school organizations. RNE also needed a motto, a "tag-line" to go along with the unveiling of the new logo and return to original school colors. After consulting with focus groups comprised of parents, students, faculty and alumni, "RNE – The Right Direction" was adopted.
- Next Steps: The work on marketing RNE is ongoing and this spring, the first ever RNE Spring Festival will take place on April 13<sup>th</sup>. It will involve the business community along Decker Boulevard and showcase performances by RNE student groups and those of the elementary and middle schools that are part of the RNE neighborhood. There will be child-friendly activities such as bounce houses and face painting and RNE sports teams will offer competitions in various sports that will be open to the public. Local health organizations will be on hand for free screenings, tours will be given of the school facilities, and the new RNE logo and tag-line will be visibly featured. The overall purpose of the day is to generate a positive association of RNE within the local community. The other ongoing work involves setting an accelerated schedule for replacing all sports team uniforms to feature the new logo and the return to original colors – consistent across all sports programs. While the RNE SIC has no fundraising involvement, it is supportive of the teams that are raising the monies needed to do this.

Goal: Improve communications between RNE and students/families/community.

The RNE SIC became very focused on improving school communications after the elimination of a grant-funded, full-time staff member who previously assisted with public relations, including parent communication and newsletters. This effort also related to the above goal regarding public perception of RNE.

- Outcome: The RNE SIC established a parent e-newsletter this year to help families stay informed on various topics such as college visits and application deadlines; sporting events and extra-curricular events; to highlight special awards received by student organizations and groups, as well as facility upgrades; and to increase the overall feeling that families are connected to the school their children attend.
- Next Steps: We continue to make the information more relevant and timely. Related to this goal is the development of the "RNE SIC Recognition Award." Beginning in 2013, teachers and faculty can nominate a student to receive this distinction, based on outstanding performance or contributions to the RNE community. It is a program designed to reward all types of students across educational levels, and will not be tied solely to academics. It will allow them to be recognized for contributions made in a variety of ways, tying much of it to the RNE Core Values that were established by the RNE SIC in 2010. Highlighting students in this manner ultimately will increase the connection that RNE makes with its families each month. In addition to this, the RNE SIC has partnered with the RNE Education Foundation Board to establish a comprehensive RNE Alumni database. This will be used to maintain the connection and communication with students and their families after graduation. This will help to improve RNE's image, to increase communications with the community and also to assist the Education Foundation with fundraising and financial support activities to benefit RNE.